

Have we found Gracie yet? or how a lost dog brought our community together.

By Tom Smith

Ken and his wife, one of our newer members, moved to Surf Pines after retiring about a year and a half ago. Shortly afterward, they adopted Gracie, who is a beautiful 75 pound white pyrenees dog who was rescued from a Texas dog rescue. This rescue held her for almost a year, after being abused by her original owner, before Ken and his wife found her through a rescue adoption site.

Gracie was obviously very skittish of human beings and other animals. Shortly after being adopted, she escaped and hid out along what we call duck lake between the upper and lower roads in our community of Surf Pines. After a few days, they were able to capture Gracie and bring her back home, where she made the bathtub into her bed and safe spot. Shortly afterward Ken's wife passed away after a brief illness.

Over the last 10 months Gracie and Ken bonded and we all noticed how she gradually became more confident and less skittish, but still uses the bathtub as her favorite safe spot. In fact, in our many walks with them, Maggie our dog and many other neighbors noticed how she seemed to have a prance to her walk and the two dogs would give each other nose kisses after checking out what each had eaten the night before.



So we all assumed that she was going to be fine. That was until last Saturday late afternoon. They were walking down the lower road (Ocean) next to the park on the second connecting road (Horizon) when a neighbor's 8 year old twins let out their 18 month doberman puppy for a pee break. Their mom had not triggered the dog's electric fence app, so the puppy bounded toward the two walkers. Poor Gracie completely freaked out, thinking she was being attacked, and slipped out of her collar and bounded into the forest.

With the evening still under standard time things became dark quickly. So the next morning, while looking for her, Gracie came within 50 feet of Ken. However, as he started heading towards her she just turned around and walked away. This was an ongoing experience over the next five days. She seemed to stay along the east side of the lake between the high road

(Manion) and Ocean like she had done the first time. She also seemed to pace back and forth from the south end of Ocean and back to Horizon. She was spotted numerous times by several members but again as Gracie was approached she would turn around and walk away.

Soon, after posting notices on both FaceBook and NextDoor more and more of the neighborhood became engaged and were rallying around the "Have we found Gracie yet?" battle cry. Many offered great suggestions like putting out clothing worn by Ken to getting an animal trap from the Animal Shelter. We tried several of these and set the trap along the lake just North of the other middle cross street (High Surf) running between Ocean and Manion.

However, it turned out that the person abusing Gracie had her in a cage and would throw objects at her, which might explain why the trap did not work.

Finally one of Ken's closest friends realized that Gracie used to jump into Ken's old jeep and treated it as another safe spot. So on the 6th day they parked the Jeep on High Surf about 100 yards from the trap on duck lake leaving the back hatch open.

During that last day multiple SP residents kept checking to see if they could find her. It was amazing to see all of the responses on our social media sites. Numerous people saw Gracie but no one could get her to come to them. However, it was noted that she would stand and watch them, which meant she was one very curious dog, which was what finally helped us catch her.

Later that afternoon, she was seen up near the south end of Sea Breeze and came up trying to play with the owners two dogs. Then she started heading back down to the lake. So one of the owners followed her down to the Jeep. The other walked around to High Surf and put more treats on the ground and in the back of the jeep and then ignored her. Of course she ran up, ate a couple of treats and jumped into the back. Then he closed the back hatch and contacted Ken for a joyous reunion.

Like most communities we have been experiencing some of the divisive issues that have impacted our communities of late. Unfortunately, this has impacted many of our members on both sides of these issues. Suddenly, with the escape of our wayward pyrenees all angst seemed to disappear. It was such a pleasure to see how the entire community came together to help.

Ken wants everyone to know that he is absolutely in awe at how much his neighbors stepped in to help in finding his buddy. "Thank you all", Gracie said from her favorite place, the tub.